

Philosophy 290
Philosophy and Science Fiction
Sept. 2021

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Office Hours: Mondays 1015– 1115 hrs., Thursdays 1315-1415hrs. and by appointment.

Text: Course pack and material on the web, as listed

Formal Course Requirements and Grading Procedures

There will be two non-cumulative examinations (a mid-term and a final), each worth 25% of the course grade, and 1 hour in length. Additionally, there will be a short paper (10 page maximum, double-spaced, Times-Roman font, standard format) worth 50% of the course grade, topics to be arranged in consultation with the instructor. Students are encouraged to decide on their paper topics early in the course. Students are expected to have read and become familiar with the assigned material prior to its presentation and discussion in class.

Significant dates:

Examinations: - mid-term examination: approx. Oct. 25, 2021
 - final examination: scheduled by the university
Papers: - paper is due Dec. 2, 2021

Exceptions from course requirements, adjustments for taking examinations at set examination dates, due-time for the paper, etc. will only be made from accordance with UVic regulations as published from the Calendar. It is the responsibility of the student to acquaint themselves and significant others with this fact so that vacations, family reunions, weddings etc. can be planned accordingly. The Mid-term examination and paper will be returned as soon as they are graded. Final examinations are the property of the University and will not be returned. They are available for viewing at the Records Office at a time designated by the University.

Approximately one-half the material from the syllabus will be covered by Oct. 21. No more precise a time-frame is possible since the amount of time spent on each topic depends on the interests of the students from the course and on the issues that arise. Unless otherwise indicated, all readings will be from the Coursepack.

Grading

Marks will be assigned on a letter basis and may be converted to a percentile grade as follows:
100 - 90 = A+, 90 - 85 = A, 85 - 80 = A-, 80 - 75 = B+, 75 - 70 = B,
70 - 65 = B-, 65 - 60 = C+, 60 - 55 = C, 55 - 50 = D, 50 - 0 = F.

Students are encouraged to discuss their examination and paper with the instructor.

Inappropriate behaviour and contraventions of academic integrity

Inappropriate behaviour and violations of standards of academic integrity as defined from the University Calendar will be dealt with from accordance with University Regulations.

TENTATIVE OUTLINE OF LECTURES AND DISCUSSIONS (Unless otherwise indicated, the readings are in the Coursepack)

I. Persons

Science Fiction

- I. Asimov, "Evidence" from I. Asimov, *I, Robot* (1950) 147-169
- J. Blish, "Watershed," from R. Silverberg, ed. *Mutants* (NY: Thomas Nelson, 1974) pp. 173-182.
- Cordwainer Smith, "The Ballad of Lost C'Mell" from Ben Bova, ed. *Science Fiction Hall of Fame* vol. II (NY: Doubleday, 1973) pp. 342-361

Philosophy

- R. Descartes, *Meditations* Chap. 1-2, available at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/descartes/1639/meditations.htm>
- I. Kant, "Transition from the Common Rational Knowledge of Morality to the Philosophical" from I. Kant, *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* transl. LW Beck (NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959) pp. 9-22.
- P.F. Strawson, "Persons" from P.F. Strawson, *Individuals* (London: Methuen, 1964)
- St. Thomas Aquinas "Whether the Human Soul is Incorruptible," from *Summa Theologica* Question LXXV article 6, available at <https://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/summa-translation/Part%201/st1-ques75.pdf>

Optional

- suggested movie for possible essay topic: *50 First Dates*, available on Netflix.
- John Campbell, "What do You Mean ... Human?" available at <http://kybele.psych.cornell.edu/~edelman/Psych-4320-scifi/Campbell-human.pdf>

II. Experimentation

Science Fiction

- D. Keyes, "Flowers for Algernon" from R. Silverberg, ed. *Science Fiction Hall of Fame* vol. I (NY: Doubleday, 1970) pp. 500-525.

Philosophy

- Tri-Council *Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* – TCPS 2 (2018); available at http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2018.html
- RL Paixão and F R Schramm, "Ethics and animal experimentation: what is debated?" available at

https://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&%20pid=S0102-311X1999000500011&lng=pt&nrm=iso&tl...

III. Reality and Perception

Science Fiction

- JL Borges, "The Circular Ruins," from *Jorge Luis Borges: Collected Fiction* transl.. A. Hurley (NY: Penguin, 1998) pp. 96-100.
- IB Singer, "Yachid and Yechida" from J Merrill, ed. *The Year's Best S-F: 10th Annual Edition* (NY: Dell, 1965) pp. 368-373.
- CL Harness, "The New Reality," from D. Knight, ed. *The Shape of Things*, (Toronto: Popular Library, 1965) pp. 42-80
- H: Gold, "The Man with English," from R. Silverberg, ed. *Strange Gifts* (NY: Thomas Nelson, 1975) pp. 96-105 (reversal of sensations)

Philosophy

- G. Berkeley, *On the Principles of Human Knowledge*
- J. Pollock, "A Brain in a Vat", available at <http://www.uky.edu/~mwa229/Pollock.pdf>
- I. Kant: "Introduction" from *The Critique of Pure Reason* transl. NK Smith (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929) pp. 41-62.

Optional Reading

- David Chalmers, "The Matrix as Metaphysics" available at David Chalmers: <http://consc.net/papers/matrix.pdf>
- L. Niven, "The Theory and Practice of Time Travel", from L. Niven, *All the Myriad Ways* from *Galaxy*, Oct. 1968.

Mid-term Examination: Oct. 25

IV. Language

Science Fiction

- JL Borges, "Funes the Memorios"
- R. Bradbury, "Referent" from Bleiler and Dikty, eds., *Imagination Unlimited* (NY: Berkley, 1952) pp. 5-13.

Philosophy

- Locke, "Of General Terms" and "Of Particles" from J. Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Bk. III. chaps. 3 & 7
- L. Wittgenstein, Paragraphs 1-47 from L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958) pp. 2-21.
- Zlatev J, Blomberg J. "Language may indeed influence thought." *Front Psychol.* 2015;6:1631. Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4628110/>

V. Religion

Science Fiction

- L. del Rey, "For I am a Jealous People," from F. Pohl, ed. *Star, Short Novels* (NY: Ballantine, 1954) pp. 65-109.(to be announced)
- Henry Kuttner, "By These Presents" from H. Kuttner, *Ahead of Time*, New York: Ballantine, 1953; pp. 24-38
- R. Sheckley, "Forever" from R. Sheckley, *Shards of Space* (Montreal: Bantam Books, 1962), pp. 126-135
- R. S. Payes, "In His Image," (shared uploaded file)

Philosophy

- St. Anselm, *Proslogion*, ontological argument, available at <https://www.webcitation.org/6Bp6qjJxw?url=http://www.anselm.edu/homepage/dbanach/anselm.htm>
- St. Thomas Aquinas, arguments for the existence of God, available at <http://web.mnstate.edu/gracyk/courses/web%20publishing/aquinasFiveWays.htm>
- I. Kant, "Paralogism of Pure Reason" from I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* transl. NK Smith (NY: Macmillan, 1965) pp. 368-380.

VI. Ethics

a. Responsibility and related issues

Science Fiction

- H. Franke, "The Orchid Cage" from H. Franke, *The Orchid Cage* transl. by C. Priest; (New York: Daw, 1973) pp. 139-174.
- Cordwainer Smith, "A Planet Named Shaol," from *Galaxy Science Fiction*, Oct. 1961
- R. Sheckley, "The Girls and Nugent Miller," from *Shards of Space* (Bantam, 1962), (shared online in Brightspace)

Philosophy

- Immanuel Kant, "Transition from the Common Rational Knowledge of Morality to the Philosophical" from I. Kant, *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* transl. LW Beck (NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959) pp. 9-22. (alternate translation available free on-line at <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext04/ikfpm10.txt>.)
- James Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism;" available at <http://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil1100/Rachels1.pdf>

b. Deliberate Death

Science Fiction

- A. Davidson, "The Certificate" from R.P Mills, ed. *A Decade of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (New York: Dell, 1959), pp. 76-80.

Philosophy

- Goligher, Ewan C et al. "Physician-Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia in the ICU: A Dialogue on Core Ethical Issues." *Critical care medicine* vol. 45,2 (2017): 149-155.

Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5245170/>
- J. Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia" *New England Journal of Medicine* 292
(1975), pp. 78-80, available at https://sites.ualberta.ca/~bleier/Rachels_Euthanasia.pdf